[illegible] Seven C-6 (1965-1967)-195. MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

their graves, and justly, too, for diving probably hastened their end. The Government demands that account books be given each diver and that they be kept up properly, and sends inspectors to see that they are. Berore the season begins at Bahrein the amount of cash advances is agreed upon and proclaimed. The divers have put up a terrific objection to this limitation, for it seemed to them that they were simply getting less money. They could not understand that their debt was being lowered—in fact they did not care, for hadn't they always been in debt?

There is a "diving court" which enforces the arbitrary laws of the industry, such as those dealing with engagement of labor, taxes, spurious pearls, etc. The court also disposes of any case of a *nakhoda* who cannot pay off his debts; the *nakhoda* may lose his boat and divers, but not his personal property.

There has never been any noticeable effort on the part of the ruling sheikhs to better the lot of their subjects: if they were unemployed for long periods in the winter they would be sure to work harder during the pearling season to pay off their winter's debts. As the local sheikhs levy a tax on every boat and get a cut of some sort on the proceeds, the pearlers in a sense work for them. The sheikh thus always looked on the lack of other employment with favor, for if a man were happily employed as a farmer, fisherman, or herder there would be little incentive to enter the pearling purgatory. Under normal conditions tne divers have an eight months' loaf during which time they live off their *nakhoda;* this is to the liking of both the diver and the *nakhoda.*

However, many divers do find other work, as fishermen or mariners. The depression of the thirties hit the Persian Gulf pearl industry with great suddenness. Within a short period tens of thousands of pearlers in the Gulf found themselves without an occupation. The marine stock of Kuwait rose to the situation and gradually shifted to cargo hauling between Kuwait and Basra, Iran, India, South Arabia, and East Africa. Large ocean-going double-ended dhows have carried the fame of Kuwait seamanship throughout the Middle East, sailing to Africa on one monsoon and back on another. Kuwait oil operations have been drawing on this labor supply as well, so that nowadays the

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs MI 2
Kuwait MI 1

M 438 361 K 161 228 439 312 262 All the cities along this coast north of Ras el Kheima are diving communities, and some of them are quite large. Kuwait, the largest, has about fifty thousand inhabitants. Kuwait has good harbor facilities, and the government of the city has been notably efficient and strong-handed for many years. A pearl diver may as well live in one coast town as another, and so Kuwait has grown to be a large city. The drinking water for this entire city is brought in specially constructed sailing vessels from the mouth of the Arab River in Mesopotamia sixty miles away. The divers live on rice that is brought them from India, on wheat that comes from Persia, and on sheep from inland Persia and Arabia. The only local product is fish. The physical surroundings of all these towns are very similar to those of Kuwait. The landscape is an unbroken and monotonous expanse of sand on one side and sea on the other. The heat in summer is extreme and the air is practically always moist, so that for three or four months in the summer the climate is almost unbearable.

[K 132]

M 228 463 In the spring the diving community begins to hum with activity. The boats are cleaned up and repaired. New masts are put in and new rigging provided. As the time for diving approaches, supplies of food and water are taken on board. The divers collect from far and near. Most of the population are divers, and in addition many more come from a distance to dive for the season. There are men from every district in Arabia and from all over Mesopotamia; a few come even from the various provinces of Persia. The place is filled with festivities and good fellowship and hopes for a successful season.

M 228 501 The day for embarkation finally comes. The boats are fitted with enormous sails, and also with a full com-

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bahrain mz 2
Maritime Arabs Mk2

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971 time and then break up and disappear. Few care whether
185 they live or die. One of the Bahrein sheikhs made a visit
658 to England at the invitation of the British Government about three years ago. On his return he collected nearly a hundred thousand dollars for the founding of a free public school. A large building was projected, but by inefficiency and carelessness, if not worse, the entire sum was spent on the first story of that building. Now the project languishes and seems about to die, purely because nobody cares whether it lives or not. Even Koran schools are few in number and poor in quality. There is nothing like the diffusion of education that prevails in the inland
M desert towns.

● 463 Although the vast majority of the people in these towns
226 are pearl divers, there are a few fishermen and a smaller number who gain a precarious livelihood as sailors in Arab sailing ships. There are abundant supplies of fish in all these harbors, but fishing is a very unpopular occupation. It is hard, disagreeable work, and the men must frequently be out in the little boats all night. When times are good and the captain's allowances liberal, nobody is willing to fish. When the pearl catch is bad or the price low every one feels poor, many eke out their small resources by this additional work, and fish becomes plenti-
M ful and cheap.

505 There were once many sea-going sail boats engaged in carrying various cargoes from port to port in this district, for the Arabs are bold navigators and can travel in these ships from India to the Suez Canal. They still bring goods from the various East African ports to Arabia, and rarely fail to make these long trips successfully, but the work is hard, and since the steamers of the "Ingleez" have absorbed more and more of the better

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East Maritime Arabs MKa

The larger ports of Kuwait, Bahrein and Dibai have also a large community of artisans and lesser merchants. These serve not simply the local diving population, but also act as manufacturers and wholesalers for the whole of Central Arabia. Practically the entire import and export trade for the interior of the peninsula goes through these three towns, and the merchant and artisan communities are large and prosperous.

It is difficult to be optimistic about the general situation in these pearl-diving communities. The actual material condition of the divers is bad enough, but worse by far is the discouragement and despair that have settled down upon the whole community. No one tries very hard to get out of debt, for he knows that barring some unforeseen miracle, he cannot do so no matter how long and hard he works and how economically he lives. There is little thrift; a stranger is often shocked by the waste that divers show in their personal and household expenditures. There is not the slightest effort, for instance, to discover what sort of clothing will give the most service for the money invested. Expensive or cheap, economical or wasteful, it is all the same. With luck when the present supply of money is gone, the captain will make another liberal allowance, and nothing better than that can be hoped for, no matter what economy and thrift are practised.

The conditions outlined above are those that obtain in the northern towns, chiefly in Bahrein. There is a second large diving community in the region known as the Pirate Coast, whose capital and largest city is Dibai. Its piratical character is a matter of history now long past, but it still makes a good deal of trouble for the British who police the Gulf and maintain order along the coast.